

Summary Report
On
Participant Characteristics at Entry
Into the
Missouri Drug Court Programs
Included in the
Multi-jurisdictional Enhancement for
Evaluation of Drug Courts

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This report is one of a series of reports produced during the process evaluation phase of a two-year study of fourteen Missouri Drug Court Programs. This report describes the individuals entering 13 Drug Court Programs included in the evaluation. It includes data on individuals who had entered the programs through June 2000.

Two types of Drug Court programs are included in this study: adult and juvenile. Adult court is a court-supervised treatment program for individuals who have committed a non-violent crime directly or indirectly involving substance abuse. Individuals in juvenile court have committed a delinquent act or a status offense and are identified as having a substance abuse problem.

The information presented in this report was derived from Drug Court program records. Participant information on over one hundred variables was collected. The information was compiled on a survey instrument, 'Client Data Code Sheet,' developed by this evaluation team.

This reports focuses on what individuals are bringing with them to drug court programs in terms of resources and experiences. This information, coupled with the other information from the process evaluation, will help in understanding not only what factors lead to successful outcomes but also what should be recognized as a successful outcome.

Number of Participants and their Status
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Number of Study Participants by Program Site

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Boone	132(26%)	———
Buchanan	78(16%)	———
Butler	12(2%)	———
Christian	45(9%)	———
Cole	41(8%)	———
Dunklin	32(6%)	———
Greene	74(15%)	———
Jackson (Family)	———	———
Jackson (Juvenile)	———	53(30%)
Lafayette	34(7%)	———
Newton	22(4%)	———
Scott	———	15(8%)
St. Louis City	———	110(62%)
St. Louis County	31(6%)	———
Total	501(100%)	178(100%)

Because of project staff and time limitations, some of the larger programs include a sample of participants. Juvenile drug courts include two urban sites, St. Louis City and Jackson County and one rural site, Scott/ Mississippi Counties.

Program Status of Study Participants as of June 2000

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Active	59%	29%
Graduated	20%	19%
Self-Terminated	2%	1%
Court Terminated	18%	48%
Missing Data	1%	3%

The majority of participants in adult courts, 59%, were actively participating in the programs at the time of data collection. Almost half of the juvenile participants, 48 percent, were court-terminated.

About one-fifth of adult and juvenile participants had graduated. Some of the courts have not been in operation long enough to have participants at the point of graduating.

The program status of participants has implications for their legal status. Depending on how well they function in the Drug Court program, individuals may leave the program with charges dropped or they may proceed to a more traditional criminal justice program.

Legal Status of Study Participants as of June 2000

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Diversion	53%	3%
Re-Entry	9%	0%
Post-Plea	36%	87%
Missing Data	2%	10%

While over half of the adult participants were diversion cases, some were also post-plea and re-entry. Many of the courts began with the intention of restricting entry but for various reasons they began to expand entry criteria. The legal status of adult participants provides a motivation to complete the program. Those entering through diversion will have no criminal record if they graduate. For those whose status is post-plea, their record may be expunged if they graduate. If they are terminated, they can expect to be sentenced. Those of re-entry status have been through a 180-day program and if they are terminated they may go back to a Department of Corrections facility. If they graduate, they may continue under some kind of supervision, usually probation and usually for a shorter period than if they had served time during the Drug Court program period.

Almost all juvenile participants had pleaded guilty to some charge before they were referred to Drug Court. This gives the courts more latitude in effecting change in the juveniles and their families.

Demographic Information

The average age of participants in the adult programs was 28. Twenty-seven percent could be classified as adolescents (17-21), 45 percent as young adults (22-35), and 29 percent as middle-aged adults (36 and over.) Juveniles fell in the age range of 12-17, adolescents. Differences in developmental stage could have an impact on experiences in drug court. It has been noted in the literature that motivations for going through drug court are vastly different for juveniles and adults, partly because of structural differences in the two types of drug courts, and partly because of the life cycle stage of the individual and his/her related worldview.

Being aware of the meaning of differences in gender and racial/ethnic identity in terms of the etiology and treatment of substance abuse can help in identifying more effective drug court programs.

Gender of Study Participants

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Male	68%	86%
Female	32%	13%
Missing Data	0%	1%

Males are in the majority in adult and juvenile courts. Research indicates that gender specific treatment programs generate better outcomes than mixed gender programs. However if a program has a small proportion of females or males it may not be cost-effective to offer gender specific programming.

Race and Ethnic Composition of Study Participants

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Caucasian	79%	27%
Black	16%	66%
Hispanic	1%	2%
Native American	1%	—
Asian	0%	1%
Other	1%	—
Missing Data	2%	4%

The adult courts largely reflect the rural population of Missouri. Minorities do not represent a significant proportion of the rural population. Not surprisingly, the majority of the adult participants are Caucasian, 79 percent. Conversely, most of the juvenile participants are from the two major urban centers of Missouri, Kansas City and St. Louis. African-Americans are disproportionately over-represented in the juvenile justice system in general. African-American youth represent about 20 percent of the youth population in Missouri. They represent 66 percent of the juvenile drug court participants. It is worth noting that a small proportion of participants has other ethnic origins. Research indicates that ethnically diverse individuals may have unique treatment needs. However, once again, it is probably not cost-effective to offer specific programs to meet their particular needs.

Income and Employment

Education is commonly related to employment opportunities and income earning potential. However, level of educational attainment did not seem to differ significantly in the study participants so it was not included in this report (average about 12 years in adult program and dependent on age of juvenile). Over half the participant records related to income earned were incomplete and thus, not reported here. Level of employability is an indicator of an individual's ability to function in a family, workplace, and community.

Income Sources

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Employment	58%	9%
Family	30%	71%
Public Assistance	7%	28%
Transfer Payments	6%	8%
Other	8%	4%
Illegal	2%	10%

Not surprisingly, the majority of adults, 58 percent, relied on employment as a source of income. What is surprising is that almost one-third, 30 percent, relied on family members for income, higher than the typical level of dependency for adults. Given that 27 percent of the adult court participants are still adolescents, they may account for the majority of those whose records indicate a reliance on family.

According to file records, the majority of juveniles, 71 percent, relied on family for income. A relatively large proportion, 28 percent, relied on public assistance. Ten percent derived income from illegal sources.

Employment Status at Entry

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Full-time	46%	1%
Part-Time	11%	6%
Unemployed	36%	21%
Student	3%	60%
Missing Data	4%	21%

For adults, the primary occupation is typically paid employment unless one is the primary care giver of other family members and has alternative sources of income such as other working family members. In the adult programs not quite half the participants were employed full-time at entry. Those that were may be at a higher level of functioning than the rest of the adults.

Individuals in the juvenile programs are between the ages of 12 and 17, a time when youth typically attend school. Just 60 percent were actually in school and only a small proportion was employed. These findings suggest that many of the youth in drug court are not attaining the important educational milestone of high school graduation. Without a high school diploma or its equivalent, they will be seriously disadvantaged throughout life.

Living Environment at Program Entry

The environment in which one lives tells much about the demands and responsibilities put on an individual, the social support systems available, and indirectly indicates something about family functioning.

Number of Dependents at Program Entry

Response	Adult	Juvenile
0	63%	90%
1	15%	1%
2	10%	—
3	5%	—
4	3%	—
Missing Data	4%	9%

Information on number of biological children was recorded but number of dependents is a better indicator of the demands and responsibilities placed on an individual. Obviously, producing a child is not the same as caring for the child. In addition, other family members may depend on an individual for support. The demands and responsibilities placed on an individual can be both a positive and negative experience as one tries to cope with a substance abuse problem. Knowing that your family depends on you can provide motivation to succeed in a drug court program. At the same time the demands of a family can conflict with the demands of a program that requires strict attendance at multiple meetings and treatment sessions. Most of the adult participants, 63 percent, had no dependents at entry. The third of the adult program participants who did have dependents may have had a different experience going through a drug court program.

Only a small minority of juveniles had a dependent. This result is not surprising. Most of the juveniles are male and often, if they have fathered a child, their parenting responsibilities are not recognized.

Living Arrangements at Program Entry

Response	Adult	Juvenile
With Spouse	6%	———
With Friends	4%	———
With Parents	25%	73%
With Children	4%	———
Alone	11%	———
No Stable Living Arrangements	3%	2%
Domestic Partner	15%	———
Alternative Living	1%	2%
Multigenerational	2%	8%
Spouse & Children	10%	———
Other	14%	9%
Missing Data	6%	7%

Reflective of U.S. society in general, individuals in the programs lived in a wide variety of settings ranging from the most traditional, spouse and children for adults (10%) and parents for juveniles (73%) to less stable living arrangements (friends, no stable arrangements, alternative living). Who one lives with suggests something about potential sources of support as well as potential demands and responsibilities placed on an individual by those in his/her living environment.

Support Network at Program Entry

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Immediate Family	61%	76%
Extended Family	20%	24%
Social Institution	10%	10%
Formal Group	8%	——

While one's living arrangements suggest potential sources of support actual support networks may differ. Family, friends, and institutions can play a key role in supporting and motivating individuals to pursue drug treatment. Records indicate that most adults (61%) and juveniles (76%) recognized their immediate family as a source of support. According to file records, social institutions like schools and churches were not widely recognized as sources of support among these individuals. Most individuals did not seem to rely on formal groups like Alcoholics Anonymous. A positive outcome could be increased recognition of the support role of social institutions and formal groups, especially if family is not an effective source of support.

Level of Positive Family Support at Program Entry

Response	Adult	Juvenile
High	19%	8%
Moderate	35%	24%
Low	26%	48%
Missing Data	20%	20%

Originally this variable was identified as ‘level of family support’ however not all support is positive and the variable was recoded to reflect positive support.

What is particularly noteworthy is the high proportion of juveniles (48%) whose record indicates low levels of family support. Previous data indicates the high reliance youth place on family for support (see the tables on income sources, living arrangements, and support networks). These results indicate a serious gap between dependence on family support and actual support received. If juveniles do not receive support from the family upon whom they depend, can they find that support in a drug court program?

Mental Health Status Indicators and Treatment History

The supply of resources available to individuals entering a drug court program can be changed in that families can learn how to provide more effective support and individuals can learn employment skills and get a job.

The past experiences that individuals bring with them to drug court cannot be erased. Through effective treatment programs, though, individuals can learn to better cope with residual effects of past experiences.

Individuals with co-occurring disorders have particular treatment needs. Substance abuse problems often cannot be treated in isolation from co-occurring disorders. Substance abuse is often a coping mechanism.

Domestic Abuse History

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Victim	21%	16%
Perpetrator	5%	—
Both	3%	2%
None Reported	59%	71%
Missing Data	12%	11%

Research indicates a relationship between substance abuse and perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. In this group of individuals, 28 percent of adults and 18 percent of juveniles had a documented history of domestic violence. Research indicates that up to half of the individuals with substance abuse problems have a history of domestic violence and additionally, research indicates that underreporting is a major issue in this population. To effectively treat substance abuse, unresolved issues related to domestic violence experiences must also be addressed.

Previous Treatment History

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Drug	19%	11%
Alcohol	5%	1%
Drug/Alcohol	15%	2%
Mental Illness	8%	10%
Co-occurring	6%	1%
None	37%	67%
Missing Data	10%	8%

The practice literature indicates that the more times an individual has been treated for substance abuse, the more likely the current treatment program will be effective in helping an individual overcome an addiction. About half the adult participants had treatment experiences previously. The juvenile programs had the highest proportion of cases (10%) with a documented history of mental illness treatment. It is likely that juveniles are more effectively monitored and treated for mental health issues through the school system. In addition, it is common for juveniles under the jurisdiction of the court to be ordered to undergo some form of mental health evaluation and treatment as a part of the court's intervention.

Alcohol Use History

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Addictive	52%	15%
Binge	14%	8%
Social	20%	23%
None	3%	40%
Missing Data	12%	14%

This was an enumerator coded variable. The enumerators read the field notes in the individual records and assessed alcohol use based on these notes. A high proportion of adults (52%) was identified as displaying addictive alcohol use behavior. Surprisingly, 23 percent of the juveniles were identified as social users of alcohol. This finding could be an artifact of the assessment criteria. Individuals were assigned to a category based on their frequency of use. Thus, juveniles who occasionally drank would be put in the category of social.

Drug of Choice at Entry

Response	Adult	Juvenile
Alcohol	16%	3%
Marijuana	35%	84%
Cocaine	18%	2%
Stimulants	13%	0%
Other	10%	3%
Missing Data	8%	8%

Research indicates that the pathway to addiction differs by substance and that treatment needs also differ. Records for adults indicate that a range of substances were preferred with marijuana being the most common (35% of

individuals). The juvenile files indicate an overwhelming preference for marijuana.

Arrest History

Previous experiences with the criminal justice system can impact how an individual behaves in drug court. The data report arrests related to various offenses prior to drug court referral. Arrests indicate number of times an individual was taken into custody by law enforcement but not the number of times the individual was actually found guilty of a crime.

Drug Possession (Number of Times Arrested Prior to Drug Court Referral)

Response	Adult	Juvenile
0	59%	62%
1	16%	16%
2	5%	3%
3	1%	3%
4	1%	—
Missing	18%	16%

Only a small proportion of the participants had been previously arrested for drug possession.

Other Drug Offenses (Number of Times Arrested Prior to Drug Court Referral)

Response	Adult	Juvenile
0	59%	80%
1	13%	2%
2	6%	—
3-6	6%	—
Missing	15%	18%

Of those arrests recorded in the drug court files, only a small proportion of individuals had been arrested for other drug offenses. These two sets of data on arrests directly related to substance use indicate that these drug court participants had had few prior encounters with law enforcement related directly to their substance use.

Other Non-Violent Arrests (Prior to Drug Court Referral)

Response	Adult	Juvenile
0	44%	24%
1	14%	20%
2	9%	17%
3	6%	8%
Range	0-79	0-12

Often substance use leads to other criminal activities like stealing money to support a habit. Higher proportions of adult and juvenile participants had been taken into custody for non-violent offenses than for drug offenses. In fact, one individual in the adult court had been arrested 79 times.

Violent Offenses (Prior to Drug Court Referral)

Response	Adult	Juvenile
0	63%	46%
1	13%	24%
2	4%	5%
3	1%	5%
Range	0-8	0-11

A criterion for entry into drug court is that the individual poses no threat to society. Originally this criterion was directly related to arrests for violent crimes and those with such a history were excluded. Over time, cases were reviewed on an individual basis and despite prior arrests for violent offenses, the individuals were considered to no longer be a threat to society. The juveniles had more of a history of violent offenses than the adults did.